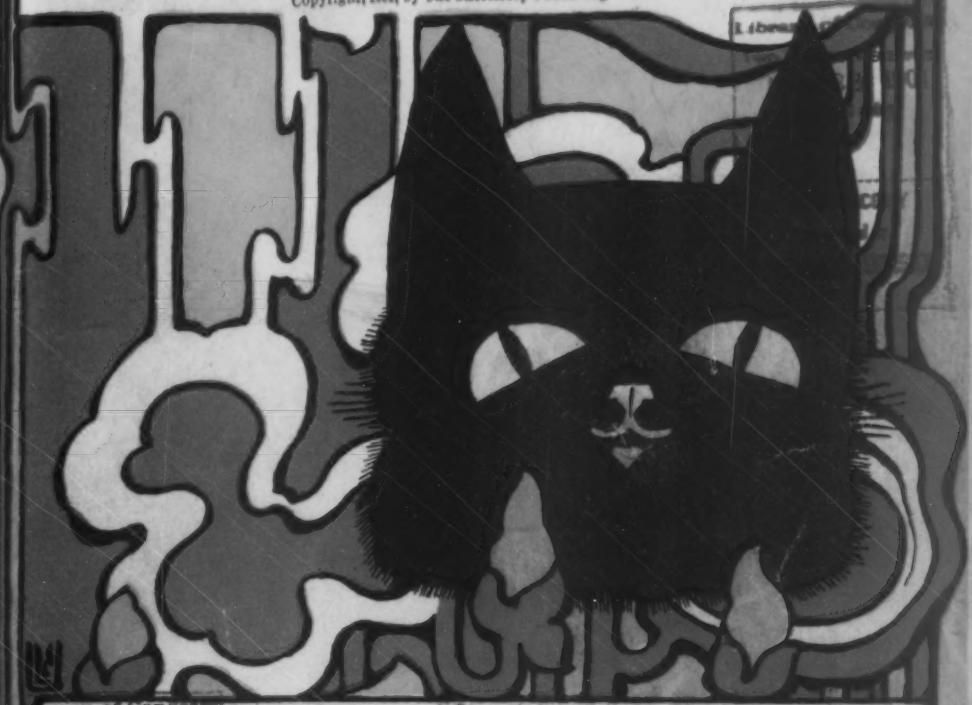
"The Smile of Joss"

The Black Cat

Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Co.



Library of Congress
TWO COPIES RECEIVED
JAN 23 1901
Copyright entry
Jan 2, 1901
XXc. 56 B
SECOND COPY
Delivered to
PERIODICAL DIVISION
JAN 23 1901

February 1901

The Smile of Joss.
$200 Prize Story.
William J. Neidig.

The Sins of Sims.
Harle Oren Cummins.

The Unassimilated Miss Downing.
Edward Stratton Holloway.

The Cross on the Plain.
George Dyre Eldridge.

The Rhyme for Rachel.
Clifford Howard.

5 CENTS

No. 65. Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Co.

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO 144 HIGH ST BOSTON, MASS.

5 Complete Stories 5

van Houten's Cocoa

A Good Beginning is Half the Battle,

so see that you begin your day well by taking a cup of Van Houten's Cocoa at breakfast time. It is a nourishing and satisfying beverage, strengthening the body for the coming fatigues of the day, and fortifying the nerves against the strain of the rush and tear of this work-a-day world.

By the special (patented) process of manufacture the subtle delicacy of the finest cocoa beans is retained, while an added value is given to the resulting beverage by the increased ease with which it can be digested. Appetising to the palate, and enticing by its delicious aroma.

Sold at the Grocery Stores. Don't forget to order a tin next time!

Copyright 1900 by Lyman D. Morse Adv'g Ag'cy for the proprietors.

The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

No. 65. FEBRUARY, 1901. 5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

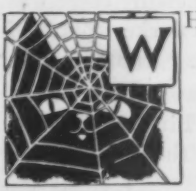
Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

THE BLACK CAT is devoted exclusively to original, unusual, fascinating stories — every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *Stories that are Stories*, and it pays not according to length, but according to strength. To receive attention, manuscripts must be sent unrolled, fully prepaid, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return. All MSS. are received and returned at their writers' risk.

CAUTION. — *The entire contents of* THE BLACK CAT *are protected by copyright, and publishers everywhere are cautioned against reproducing any of the stories, either wholly or in part.*

The Smile of Joss.*

BY WILLIAM J. NEIDIG.



HEN he had washed the dishes, Sam Wren threw off his white apron, drew on his surtout, and went down town. Not to the joss house nor the theatre nor Li Hung Ching's tan game. No! Sam was not such a heathen. Instead, he headed straight for the mission, where there was to be an entertainment that evening.

Sam was walking quietly along, looking neither to the right nor the left, when a bit of red paper fluttered to his feet. The paper contained his name, with the legend "Look out for Ah Fat!" in Chinese. When you find a piece of red paper in the street in Chinatown with your name on it, and the legend "Look out!" in Chinese, it means that you've been doing something that some one doesn't like. It means that somebody has given your name to the devil. Red paper stands for devil. "Ah Fat" stands for — well, Sam Wren knew who Ah Fat was. The warning was evidently from a friend.

One would think that a Chinaman with a good conscience would not be looking back over his shoulder every few rods, to see if he

* Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $200 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

were being followed by the Great Black Bogie; that is, a mission Chinaman, who didn't believe in black bogies, and didn't care a tea-leaf whether the devil's eye had a cinder in it from his sandal-wood incense or not. Still, it makes a difference when you know the devil has your name. It's just as well to keep your eyes open when you know a devil is after you. Devils have black teeth, they say. That's so you can't see them when they grin at you in the dark. Never look for a devil's teeth. It's pretty hard to see a devil, unless you get him in the light.

Sam was nearing his journey's end, and nothing had happened. When he should have passed the next dark alleyway he would be all right. That's as close as devils ever get to the mission. It was lighter across the street. Sam thought he would cross the street before he got to the dark alleyway. Besides, walking was easier across the street.

Sam crossed the street. He came opposite the dark alleyway. Almost he was entirely past its menace; when suddenly there was a little cough of fire from the very center of the darkest place of all. Ping! went a bullet, smash against the fence. Another shot, and another. Ping! Ping! The bullets followed him, and he thought he was gone. Now for the mission. Ping! The last bullet stuck in the door-jamb as he burst open the door of his haven. Confucius! but it was a close shave!

Sam Wren knew a thing or two — that he did not learn at the mission — about devils. He knew perfectly well which of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys it was that had shot so wretchedly. Useless knowledge! Ah Fat was a poor shot; that was true. But he could use a knife beautifully. And he was patient; if he did not get his Chinaman this time he would the next. And he was experienced; one corner of the graveyard belonged to him. And he was sly; he had never yet been caught at his mischief. And he was not alone; the Suey Sing Tong was behind him. Ah Fat was the most desperate highbinder in the Suey Sings. Indeed, they had but three. The Suey Sings were a little short on highbinders. Ah Fat and Luy Ling and Luy Kam constituted the entire force. Three men had stepped out from the alleyway. Sam Wren knew who they were.

It doesn't pay to stick your nose in other people's business. It

doesn't pay to stand in with the reform work, and help tear low-browed slave girls from their purchasers. You are liable to get hurt, if you happen to be a Chinaman yourself.

Sam slammed the door of the mission, and ran squealing to the men's quarters. He threw himself upon a bunk and drew the covers over his head. His breath came in gasps. He lay shuddering and cowering, and muttered strange words between his chattering teeth. These reformers carry a thing too far. He had never intended to antagonize the entire Suey Sing Tong. Too late now! He was as good as dead now! All the lady reformers in this world couldn't save him now!

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, midnight. One by one the mission boys had gone to bed. The house was quiet as the dead earth. Every Chinaman was in his bunk, and every Chinaman was asleep — every one, save only Sam Wren. Sam Wren lay like a corpse, with his face to the wall and the blankets drawn over his head. There was not the slightest pulse of blood in his body. It is a terrible thing to have the hatchet-boys after you.

King, the mission housekeeper, before kicking off his embroidered holiday slippers, had stuck three or four pieces of sandalwood punk in a flower-pot, and lighted them. It was not superstition; although, indeed, there is nothing like sandalwood punk for scattering devils. No. It was merely that he liked the fragrance of the burning incense. After a time the room became sweet and pleasant, and lost the disagreeable laundry smell that somehow hangs about a Chinaman's lodgings when you don't burn something to drive it away.

One o'clock, two o'clock. The air was heavy with smoke, and the punk-sticks had at last been consumed by the gnawing glow-worm that will eat straight into the heart of a devil if he comes too close. Sam was still awake, shuddering beneath his blanket. Suddenly he sniffed. It was the incense from the burning sandalwood that penetrated to his nostrils. Sweet and pungent, it carried him back a thousand years, to when he was young, to when he kneeled prostrate before his joss and took the oath of the Sam Yups and had no fear in his heart. Now he was no longer a heathen, and was afraid. Why was he afraid now, and not then? Perhaps it was because of his enemies. Perhaps it was because

were being followed by the Great Black Bogie; that is, a mission Chinaman, who didn't believe in black bogies, and didn't care a tea-leaf whether the devil's eye had a cinder in it from his sandal-wood incense or not. Still, it makes a difference when you know the devil has your name. It's just as well to keep your eyes open when you know a devil is after you. Devils have black teeth, they say. That's so you can't see them when they grin at you in the dark. Never look for a devil's teeth. It's pretty hard to see a devil, unless you get him in the light.

Sam was nearing his journey's end, and nothing had happened. When he should have passed the next dark alleyway he would be all right. That's as close as devils ever get to the mission. It was lighter across the street. Sam thought he would cross the street before he got to the dark alleyway. Besides, walking was easier across the street.

Sam crossed the street. He came opposite the dark alleyway. Almost he was entirely past its menace; when suddenly there was a little cough of fire from the very center of the darkest place of all. Ping! went a bullet, smash against the fence. Another shot, and another. Ping! Ping! The bullets followed him, and he thought he was gone. Now for the mission. Ping! The last bullet stuck in the door-jamb as he burst open the door of his haven. Confucius! but it was a close shave!

Sam Wren knew a thing or two — that he did not learn at the mission — about devils. He knew perfectly well which of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys it was that had shot so wretchedly. Useless knowledge! Ah Fat was a poor shot; that was true. But he could use a knife beautifully. And he was patient; if he did not get his Chinaman this time he would the next. And he was experienced; one corner of the graveyard belonged to him. And he was sly; he had never yet been caught at his mischief. And he was not alone; the Suey Sing Tong was behind him. Ah Fat was the most desperate highbinder in the Suey Sings. Indeed, they had but three. The Suey Sings were a little short on highbinders. Ah Fat and Luy Ling and Luy Kam constituted the entire force. Three men had stepped out from the alleyway. Sam Wren knew who they were.

It doesn't pay to stick your nose in other people's business. It

doesn't pay to stand in with the reform work, and help tear low-browed slave girls from their purchasers. You are liable to get hurt, if you happen to be a Chinaman yourself.

Sam slammed the door of the mission, and ran squealing to the men's quarters. He threw himself upon a bunk and drew the covers over his head. His breath came in gasps. He lay shuddering and cowering, and muttered strange words between his chattering teeth. These reformers carry a thing too far. He had never intended to antagonize the entire Suey Sing Tong. Too late now! He was as good as dead now! All the lady reformers in this world couldn't save him now!

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, midnight. One by one the mission boys had gone to bed. The house was quiet as the dead earth. Every Chinaman was in his bunk, and every Chinaman was asleep — every one, save only Sam Wren. Sam Wren lay like a corpse, with his face to the wall and the blankets drawn over his head. There was not the slightest pulse of blood in his body. It is a terrible thing to have the hatchet-boys after you.

King, the mission housekeeper, before kicking off his embroidered holiday slippers, had stuck three or four pieces of sandalwood punk in a flower-pot, and lighted them. It was not superstition; although, indeed, there is nothing like sandalwood punk for scattering devils. No. It was merely that he liked the fragrance of the burning incense. After a time the room became sweet and pleasant, and lost the disagreeable laundry smell that somehow hangs about a Chinaman's lodgings when you don't burn something to drive it away.

One o'clock, two o'clock. The air was heavy with smoke, and the punk-sticks had at last been consumed by the gnawing glow-worm that will eat straight into the heart of a devil if he comes too close. Sam was still awake, shuddering beneath his blanket. Suddenly he sniffed. It was the incense from the burning sandalwood that penetrated to his nostrils. Sweet and pungent, it carried him back a thousand years, to when he was young, to when he kneeled prostrate before his joss and took the oath of the Sam Yups and had no fear in his heart. Now he was no longer a heathen, and was afraid. Why was he afraid now, and not then? Perhaps it was because of his enemies. Perhaps it was because

Joss stood in with you, if you burned enough paper devils before him, when you had enemies that you wanted to kill. The mission ladies wouldn't let you kill your enemies. It's pretty bad when you can't kill your enemies, and they are after you with pistols and knives and sand-bags. Joss, of course, is a wicked old heathen god, but he lets you kill your enemies.

Two o'clock and fifteen minutes. The Sam Yups kept their joss-house open all night, because you never can tell when you are going to need a joss-house. Sam Wren softly crept out of his bunk and slipped on his shoes. Then, with infinite patience, he unbolted the back door, felt his way down the back stairway, and lost himself in the blackness of the street. He knew that there was a hatchet-boy in the black alleyway, because the Suey Sings never let up on a man once they start in, and so he was very careful, and kept away from the hatchet-boy. At last he arrived at the joss-house, and the sleepy old sentinel passed him through the tortuous, smoky corridors into the presence of Joss himself. He bought of the old man some punk, and some red papers that represented the different orders of devils.

Sam burned his incense in the way prescribed by his tong ancestors. It is very simple. First you light two punk-sticks, one for each hand, and hold them before the face of Joss, your eyes on the ground. Then you bend forward and press your forehead against the sacred mat, holding your punk-sticks so that the feet of Joss shall be shrouded in smoke. Then you chant the sacred lines of your tong, having care to use only the mandarin dialect. When your chant is ended you may withdraw backward, bending low your forehead thrice three times toward the floor. Now, with face averted, you rise. You turn with your back toward Joss. The old priest, with much ceremony, gives over to your keeping the red paper devils which you are to burn, and you light them, one after another, until they are all consumed. No tiniest fragment must escape the flame. If one should get away with his wings singed, or if a fragment of one should not be burned, that devil would take up his residence in your house. Nobody ever lets a devil get away from him.

Sam flaunted his incense before the face of Joss, and bowed his forehead to the sacred mat, and backed away, and turned and

burned his devils without so much as a fragment of any one of them getting away; then he went straight to the corner of the room, where there was a door. He knew now that Joss would smile upon him. The old priest unlocked the door that opened into the Closet of Mystery. Sam selected a slender, keen-edged knife and a stouter stiletto from what was therein displayed, and hid them in his blouse. Then he slipped out into the street and lost himself once more in the night.

But it was no longer Sam Wren the mission proselyte, trembling for his life, no longer Sam Wren the timid Chinese cook; it was Sam Wren of the Sam Yups, with a knife in his hand and the smile of Joss in his heart. Save for the halo of an occasional street-lamp the night was pitch-black. Sam slipped from doorway to doorway, shadow to shadow, street to street, and there was no one to see him. He was part of the night. Now he enters a narrow areaway. He creeps along the ground. He flattens himself against a fence. Cautiously, swiftly, surely, he makes his way through back yards and around obstructions, approaching the mision nearer and nearer.

Half-past-three o'clock. Sam Wren the Sam Yup man presses his body through a hole in a fence and crouches in the blind alleyway that shelters his enemies. He must be very careful now. He knows that one of the Suey Sings still holds guard before the mission. He knows that the hatchet-boys are patient fellows, and never sleep. Perhaps it is Ah Fat who is watching; perhaps it is one of the others. Whichever it is, he is not asleep. The Suey Sings never sleep when they are on a spoor.

Very softly and stealthily the Sam Yup man steals forward. Joss has lent him an invisible cloak, and feet that make no noise. Nearer, nearer, nearer, he draws. He is crawling on his hands and knees in the black angle where the fence meets the ground. The Suey Sing man ought to be very near. There is no telling. It is too black to see.

One foot, two feet more. It is blacker than black ahead. Another advance, slowly, slowly, nearer, nearer, nearer. The blackness takes form. There is something — something — in the alleyway. Very softly the Sam Yup man rises. He bends forward. The black body is an ash-barrel; but against it, with his

face turned in the other direction, leans the Suey Sing hatchet-boy. Sam Wren steals, steals, steals forward, still forward. He moves an inch in a week. Almost he is near enough to strike — almost. He places his hand upon the ash-barrel. He leans over it, forward, forward, forward. He raises his firm right hand, very carefully, very patiently. With a swift stroke he draws it across the shadow, close under the chin. The Suey Sing man falls in a heap, gurgles a little, and lies very still. The Sam Yup man wipes his knife on the Suey Sing man's blouse.

When the Suey Sing man had quit kicking, the Sam Yup man took him by the heels and dragged him behind the ash-barrel. Then he took up his position where the other had stood, and waited. He knew that the others would be along before daylight. He knew that they were expecting Sam Wren the stupid cook to leave the mission at an early hour. The white man who employed him had to have his breakfast. No doubt his stupid cook never dreamed that the Suey Sing boys would wait for him all night.

Sam Wren waited, and waited, and the night grew blacker as it grew older. Four o'clock. It is time the Suey Sings were at their post. Four fifteen. Someone is coming up the street. The Sam Yup man never moves a muscle. The footsteps draw nearer. They are at the head of the alley. The Sam Yup man does not seem to notice them. They pass on up the street. The Sam Yup man can tell a Chinaman's wooden footsteps as far as he can hear them. It was probably a printer on one of the morning papers.

Now there is another sound of footsteps in the street. Another printer has finished his work and is going home. The footsteps approach the head of the alleyway, and then they stop for a moment. They begin again. A muffled black figure enters the fatal court. Not a word is spoken. Not a word of greeting passes between the watcher of the night and his brother Suey Sing who comes to reinforce him at the appointed hour. The black shape draws quite close to the ash-barrel. The next moment the newcomer falls like a log, with a stiletto through his heart. Beautiful work! Ah Fat himself couldn't have done it cleaner.

The Sam Yup man lets Luy Kam lie where he falls, for he has Ah Fat still to reckon with. Ah Fat is not the man to walk up

and let a friend run a stiletto between his ribs, that is sure. Ah Fat is the keenest of the lot. No doubt he will have a good deal to say about the disposition to be made of knives and stilettos in his neighborhood. It is still very dark. Now and then some one passes in the street; now and then in the distance can be heard the rumble of milk wagons and produce carts. There are people who never keep Sunday, it seems.

The terrible leader of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys came sooner than was expected; that is to say, he came without the warning sound of shuffling wooden shoes, and without any signal whistle. For the rest, when his gaunt shape loomed up before Sam Wren, the Sam Yup man was ready for him.

"Huh! I smell blood!" said Ah Fat, in his thick Canton-Chinese.

"He bled like a hog!" replied Sam coldly, in the same dialect, speaking as few words as possible.

Ah Fat betrayed neither emotion nor surprise. He kicked the body with his foot. Then he fished out a match, and leaned over the corpse, lighting the match upon his shoe.

"You got to be damn sure," he said, as he held the flame over the dead face.

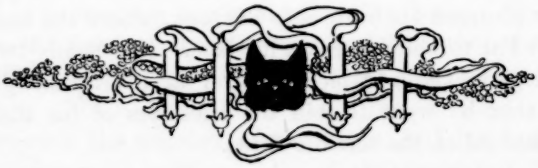
Sam Wren was standing behind him, and when the other bent over the dead man, Sam seized his Suey Sing pigtail firmly in one hand, jerked his head back sharply, and slit his throat from jowl to jowl. The blood spurted forth upon the ground. Ah Fat lurched forward in his rage, fumbling at his pocket. Then he tried to rise, but his knees weakened and would not support him. Sam Wren plunged his knife into his back, where the heart ought to be. Ah Fat tumbled over on his face. His hands twitched a little, his legs kicked a little, the horror at his throat gurgled a little, and then he went to join the ancestors of his tong. And that was the end of the terrible three.

The Sam Yup man felt of each to make sure that he was dead before he left them. The blood flowed once more through his veins. He was contented in his heart. He wanted to dance. He wanted to cry aloud. He felt gloriously exultant. But he did not dance, nor sing, nor cry aloud. It was beginning to grow gray in the east, and it would soon be breakfast time. Sam Wren the Sam Yup man wiped the blood from his hands on the clothing

of the dead Chinamen, and the soles of his shoes also, where he had stepped in the crimson puddle. Then Sam Wren the cook went home and got breakfast.

It is a beautiful thing to feel that you are a member of the great human family. In the morning, after he had finished up his work, Sam went to the Chinese church. In the afternoon Sam went to Sunday-school and taught a class of China boys. In the evening Sam set out for the mission. Although he walked through the heart of Chinatown, no red paper devils fluttered to his feet, and he never once looked back over his shoulder to see if he was followed. He did not cross the street when he came to the black alleyway, but went boldly past. And he did not squeal when he climbed the mission steps. He had his Chinese Bible with him. Perhaps that was the reason. Or perhaps it was the Sunday-school. Or perhaps it was the sermon of the morning.

The Monday papers contained an account of a mysterious high-binder murder, in which three innocent Chinamen had been slain near the Chinese mission, by the hatchet-boys. As usual, there was no clue to the murderers.



The Sins Of Sims.*

BY HARLE OREN CUMMINS.

HE following letter, strange as the connection may at first seem, was the indirect cause of my elevation from the position of bell-boy in a Boston hotel to a head clerkship with one of the largest book-publishing houses in America:

BOSTON, MASS., May 4, 1900.

MESSRS. CHOATE, COLLENDER & CO.,
New York City,

Gentlemen:—I send you to-day by same mail, registered, the MS. for a book entitled, "Over the Hot Sands." It is, as you will see upon reading, an exposé of Masonry, and contains all the secrets of every one of the thirty-three degrees of that fraternity. It is worth not thousands, but millions of dollars, for the number of editions which you can sell will exceed tenfold that of the greatest literary success of any century. It is perfectly safe to say that you can dispose of 5,000,000 copies, and the fortune of the firm which publishes this work is assured.

As none of the members of your firm are Masons, there will be no blame whatsoever attached to any of you for publishing such a work, and the punishment, should any result, would fall entirely on me, the author, for which reason I must enjoin absolute secrecy in all our future dealings.

I offer this MS. to you for $25,000, and when you consider that you will probably receive from two to three million dollars for the same, my price does not seem high.

If you accept my proposal, the accompanying directions must be followed in every detail. The money must be sent, not by check, but in fifty $500 banknotes, securely tied up into as small a package as possible, and sent, registered, to arrive in Boston, Friday, May 11, 1900.

Yours,
FRAWLEY SIMS,
Lock Box 11,136, Boston, Mass.

But, before I tell you of the part I took in the scheme of Mr. Frawley Sims, I must go back to the date of the arrival of the above letter at Choate, Collender & Co's.

Unfortunately for the success of the author of "Over the Hot Sands," the assistant manager, into whose hands the letter chanced to fall, was a Mason, a Knight Templar, and an enthusiastic craftsman of high degree. Horrified at what he had read, he searched the morning's mail for a manuscript directed in the cramped, illegible hand in which the letter was written. He

* Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

found it at last; a small package, the wrapper of which bore the same handwriting as the letter, and tearing it hastily open, he began to read.

There, on neatly written pages, were revealed all the secrets of the Masonic order. As, with trembling hands, he turned over the leaves he read the true explanation of every mystic sign and symbol, the exact phraseology of every obligation, an accurate description of every grip, password and instruction, from the lowest to the highest degree, Scottish rite and York rite, and even including the side degrees of the Eastern Star and the Mystic Shrine, all were given.

"If that book is ever published, it means the complete collapse of the Masonic fraternity," muttered Beekman, the assistant manager, to himself. "Mr. Frawley Sims's estimate of five million copies is far too low. Every curious old maid, every woman whose husband is a Mason, every member of a rival fraternity, would buy a copy of such a book, no matter what the price. This must never come to the notice of the firm, if I can prevent it, even at the cost of my position."

He went to Mr. Choate, the senior partner, and pleading illness secured a half-holiday. Hunting up the highest officials of the order among his acquaintance, he informed them of the impending danger. That day messages flashed over the wires to the Grand Lodge officers and to the officials of the national organization, summoning them to Boston, and three days later a council of war to decide how to checkmate the daring scheme of Frawley Sims was held in the Masonic temple of that city. One of the Grand Wardens, living in Denver, had travelled by special train all the way to New York. It was finally decided to send, on the specified date and as requested in the letter, a package which, however, should contain, not five-hundred-dollar notes, but blank sheets of paper. Two detectives belonging to the order were detailed with instructions to wait at the General Postoffice during the remainder of the week for a man calling for a registered package or receiving other mail for Frawley Sims. If the identity of the man could be established, the rest would be comparatively easy. Once before in the history of Masonry a man had attempted to forswear his oaths and betray to the curious world the secrets of

that order. That was in 1827, and the traitor had disappeared from human ken as quickly and entirely as a pebble dropped in the ocean.

The following note was sent to the Boston address, Beekman taking it upon himself to sign the firm's initials:

NEW YORK, May 8, 1900.

MR. FRAWLEY SIMS,
Boston, Mass., Box 11,136.

SIR: — Manuscript received. Think favorably of your offer. Will send notes Friday as specified.

Very truly yours,
C., C. & Co.

Messages were sent to every Masonic jurisdiction in the country asking if anything was known of a Mr. Frawley Sims, Knight Templar and Thirty-third degree Mason, but, as might be expected, nothing was learned. No lodge had that name on its membership roll, or had ever heard of such a man. Nothing, therefore, remained to be done except to wait for the eleventh day of May, when Sims or his representative would call at the Boston office to secure the answer to his offer.

Strict watch was kept by the two detectives, but no one called during the week for Frawley Sims's mail. On Friday morning, however, there was a notice to call for a registered package lying in Box 11,136.

May 11 was, as you may or may not remember, the date of the Corbett-Jeffries fistic encounter in Brooklyn, and on the night of that day, while thousands of men were eagerly waiting for news from the Seaside Athletic Club, other thousands, doubly anxious, were assembled in the Masonic temples of nearly every large city in the United States, waiting for a message from Boston to learn whether Frawley Sims had been captured.

Now, having conducted the reader thus far, I will explain how it happened that I, Robert Banner, Bell-boy No. 8 at one of the largest and best Boston hotels, became involved in and learned the details of one of the cleverest as well as the most perfidious schemes ever devised by an unscrupulous man.

Late in the afternoon of May 11, 1900, I answered the call of "front" and showed a man, registering as Kendrick Little, Buffalo, N. Y., to Room 326. He was a tall, handsome man about forty-five years of age, with iron-gray hair. He was clean shaven

and wore eyeglasses. Once in the room I saw him look searchingly at me, and when I asked him if there was anything I could bring him, he ordered two Martini cocktails and told me to get excused from the office as he wanted me to go on an important errand.

When, after getting permission from the office to be gone for a couple of hours, I returned some ten minutes later with the drinks, and also my hat and coat, he was sitting by the table writing.

"Lay your coat on the bed, and sit down for a few minutes," he commanded, indicating with his pen a chair opposite him. He continued writing slowly, as if thinking over what he was saying, looking up from time to time to gaze absently at me. Once he stopped for a minute and asked me my name, though I did not at the time connect myself with what he was writing. Finally, after a scrutiny which I had begun to find painful, he threw down the pen suddenly and leaning across the table, looked me full in the face and asked quietly:

"Robert Banner, do you want to earn fifty dollars to-night in an honest way, and then hold your tongue about it afterwards?"

As you can imagine, I was more than a little surprised by such a proposal, but I found my tongue quickly, and assured him that I was both willing and anxious to earn some extra money, provided there was nothing dishonorable about the undertaking.

"Well, then," he answered, "listen attentively to what I am going to say and see if it comes within the scope of what you consider honorable." There was a slight trace of a sneer in the last of the sentence, but I was too eager to hear about the fifty dollars to pay much attention to it.

"I suppose you have heard of lotteries, and the difficulty of sending the tickets through the mails?"

I nodded and he continued; "I have ordered twenty-five of these tickets in a lottery. They were to have been sent to me yesterday from New York, and are now no doubt at the General Postoffice in a registered package, addressed to Mr. Frawley Sims."

I remembered seeing the name he had scrawled on the hotel register downstairs, but said nothing.

"I will give you a written order which will enable you to get this package for me, and I will pay you in advance twenty-five

dollars. The remaining twenty-five dollars I will give you on the safe delivery of the package. There can be no danger to you, as you are simply performing one of your duties as bell-boy in this hotel, and, should any trouble arise, you are not supposed to know what the package you are sent for contains. I have told you its contents simply to explain why it is that I give so large a fee for your services, and to ensure your giving the commission your undivided attention. It would be a very difficult thing for me to account for having such a package in my possession, while you, as I have explained, run no risk whatever. Can you reconcile all this with your honorable conscience?"

I had been thinking rapidly while he was talking. I knew that, under the present close surveillance of the mails, the usual method of selling lottery tickets was through agents, who travelled about the country and delivered them personally. I therefore judged Mr. Frawley Sims, alias Kendrick Little, to be one of these distributing agents. That the package contained lottery tickets I did not in the least doubt, but that the number was only twenty-five, or that he was purchasing them for himself, I very much questioned. However, that was his business, not mine, and if he chose to give me fifty dollars for simply going to the postoffice and getting a registered package, I saw no reason why I should not accept it. True, I might be aiding and abetting the sale of lottery tickets, which I knew was forbidden by law, but, as he said, if there was any trouble I could not be expected to know the contents of every parcel I was charged with carrying. Then, too, I was working for seven dollars a week, and his liberal offer was too great a temptation for me, and I agreed to do his errand.

He counted out five five-dollar banknotes, and as he handed them to me I noticed that his hand trembled slightly.

"Now," said he, "I want you to listen to the directions I am going to give you as carefully as if your life depended on them. After securing this package of tickets you must put it in your inside coat pocket, and take a carriage up Milk Street to Washington Street. Get out at the Old South Church, and walk slowly along Newspaper Row. On account of the prize fight to-night there will be a large crowd about the bulletin boards. When you get to the *Globe* office take the package out of your pocket

cautiously, so that no one following you would notice your action, and as you pass the main entrance to the building I will run against you and snatch the package from your hand. You may then take a car to the hotel, and wait for me here. That will complete your duties, and I will pay you the remaining twenty-five dollars on my return to the hotel to-night." He gave me another dollar for cab-fare, and I started for the postoffice.

As I stepped up to the registry window I noticed two men standing near talking earnestly. When I asked for a registered package for Frawley Sims, Box 11,136, one of the two men by the window stepped close beside me and looked at me sharply, and then moved back to his companion, but when I looked for them again they had disappeared. I had some difficulty in getting the tickets, but I gave the registry clerk my note from Mr. Sims and showed him my badge to prove that I was in the hotel employ, and finally he handed me, not the package I had expected, but a long white envelope, in the upper left-hand corner of which I saw the name Choate, Collender & Co.

I had heard of this great book-publishing house in New York, and knowing that they, of course, could not be concerned in the sale of lottery tickets, I concluded that the envelope had been obtained merely to blind the postoffice officials.

I walked out of the office and, as I stepped into a waiting cab, the two men I had noticed inside called another carriage, and I thought I saw one of them point in my direction to their driver, but it was beginning to get dark, so I was not sure. I followed exactly the directions given me by Mr. Sims, left my carriage suddenly at the corner, and walked down Washington Street toward the newspaper offices.

A large crowd was already forming in front of the bulletin boards, and I could scarcely force my way along. There was a little clear space just in front of the main door of the *Globe* building, and as I started across it some one collided violently with me, and I felt the envelope snatched from my grasp. This was what I was expecting, but to my surprise another envelope was at the same time thrust into my hand, and as I turned to look back I saw the tall form of Frawley Sims, or Kendrick Little, whichever he was, pushing his way down the street.

Wondering at this new development, I worked my way out of the jam, and held the envelope up to a lighted window to see if there was any address on it, thinking that perhaps Mr. Sims had another commission for me to execute. In the same ungainly hand as the scrawl on the hotel register was written:

Mr. Robert Banner,
Boston, Mass.,

and down in one corner in small letters were the two words "Preserve Carefully." Thrusting the envelope into my pocket, I jumped on a car, rode back to the hotel and hurried up to Room 326. I was not surprised to find the door locked, but when I went downstairs to the office the key was not on the rack where the room keys were kept when the guests were away from the house. I asked the front clerk for Mr. Sims, saying that I had been on an errand for him.

"He settled his bill and left half an hour ago, but before he went he gave me this letter for you."

I tore open the envelope and there, neatly folded inside one of the hotel noteheads, were a twenty and a five dollar bill. I was about to slip the envelope into my pocket when I felt a light touch on my shoulder, and turning, found myself face to face with the tall man I had seen in the postoffice.

"You just received a registered letter for Mr. Sims," he said quietly, not as one would ask a question, but as if he were simply stating a fact.

"I did," I stammered, a vague fear taking possession of me.

"I must ask you to come with me for a little while." This, too, was in the same quiet tone he had first used, but as he threw back his coat I saw the gleam of a badge, which recognizing, I dared not disobey. As I followed him out of the hotel my fear increased as I saw the wondering looks on the faces of the other bell-boys. The tall man beckoned to a cabman who was walking his horse slowly along in front of the hotel, and as the carriage drew up to the curbstone the door was thrown open, and, in obedience to a gesture, I stepped in to find the other man from the postoffice on the front seat.

The remainder of my experiences would form a long story, and

they were very exciting, but, to make the story short, I was taken to a large room in which a hundred or so excited men were assembled, and from the various emblems and insignia upon the walls and the furnishings of the room I knew I was in a Masonic hall. At a small table in one corner sat three men rapidly writing telegrams. When two or three dozen had accumulated, a nervous little man gathered them up and hurried out of the room. Once, as the door opened, I caught a glimpse of half a dozen boys dressed in the blue uniform of the telegraph service.

I was put through an examination concerning my connection with Frawley Sims, which was as severe as if I had been in the witness box in a murder trial, and Mr. Beekman the prosecuting lawyer. When I found how my supposed lottery ticket purchaser had been trying to obtain money, I was terribly frightened, for I remembered reading of Captain William Morgan, who published a few Masonic secrets, and who was alleged to have been sent over Niagara falls in an iron kettle. I could see that if I was found guilty I could expect little mercy from the determined looking men around me.

I told my story, however, exactly as I have written it here, but I hardly think I should have been believed had I not suddenly remembered the envelope which Frawley Sims thrust into my hands when he snatched from me the one I had taken from the postoffice. In my excitement I had forgotten all about it until that moment. I produced it, and handing it to Mr. Beekman, told him exactly how I had obtained it. He glanced over it hastily, and then turning to the anxious men who were watching him, he read:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:—

This is to certify that Robert Banner, bell-boy, is wholly ignorant of the contents of the letter taken by him at my request from the Boston postoffice on May 11, 1900. He has had nothing whatsoever to do with the book "Over the Hot Sands." The only person concerned in that undertaking is

FRAWLEY SIMS, 33°.

This letter, of course, cleared me completely from any connection with the scheme, and I was treated very kindly the rest of the evening, during the course of which I learned the details given in the first part of this narration. I gave as accurate a description as I could of Frawley Sims, and every effort was made to locate the man; thousands of dollars were spent, and every possible clue

carefully followed up. If the matter could have been made public and a description of the man printed in the papers, perhaps he would have been caught, but as his offence was not criminal in the eyes of the law, and as publicity was the last thing that the Masonic fraternity desired, the disadvantages under which they worked proved too great, and nothing was ever heard of Frawley Sims. He had probably scented danger immediately upon opening the envelope and finding only blank paper and had hurried at once to the nearest station and made his escape.

It was through the efforts of Mr. Beekman that I secured my present position of shipping clerk with Cheate, Collender & Co. Indeed, this was only one of several offers which were made me by the Masons in recognition of my services.

My present employers never knew of the precious MS. which was submitted to them for publication, and although Mr. Frawley Sims is still at large I do not think he will ever again make such an offer to any publisher. One day while I was spending some of the fifty dollars I had earned so easily I had a feeling of sympathy for the man who had treated me with the greatest of kindness and generosity. So, that night I wrote a letter to Mr. Sims, telling him exactly what had happened to me after leaving him at the hotel that day in May, and addressed the letter to Box 11,136, Boston. Shortly afterwards my letter was returned to me by the postal authorities, with a statement that the references given by Mr. Frawley Sims on hiring the box May 1st had proved to be forged letters of recommendation and that his whereabouts was unknown. It is, therefore, partly in the hope that Frawley Sims will read these lines, and know that I did as he directed, and that I for one am deeply indebted to him, that I have written this.

"Over the Hot Sands" was, of course, not published, but the MS. is carefully preserved in a strong box in the rooms of the Aurora Lodge, A. F. and A. M., on East Twenty-sixth Street, and is one of the objects of greatest interest to Masons visiting in New York City.

The Unassimilated Miss Downing.*

BY EDWARD STRATTON HOLLOWAY.

DO not know a better way of acquainting you with the preliminary facts than to plunge in and quote from the rapid, vigorous scrawl which Barbara Downing thrust into an envelope, adorning it with one carmine two-cent stamp and one oblong blue "Special Delivery":

Dora, the conventions smothered me. To day the unusual has — well, read this. I'm wondering if the protecting arms of convention will ever be around me again. Before night I may be arrested for complicity in an act of treason — I don't know.

As I say, I was simply stifled — I *had* to have some sort of lark. In all conscience it seemed a mild enough one, but it was the only thing that offered just then.

After tearing around all the afternoon shopping — and spending about three hundred dollars — I went to a "Mesmerist and Reader of the Stars" away over on Capitol Hill. It was dusk when I got there, and it was a lonely, forbidding sort of place. He was horrid, too, in his manner, and I wouldn't have it. So, I suppose he revenged himself in his own way. He predicted the most dreadful things. Of course I saw what he was doing, but everything was so uncanny that, if I had the creeps in the first place, before I got away I was thoroughly frightened. Then there were four long blocks to walk to the car. Lonely doesn't describe it. It was along a high bank, overgrown with trees. I had in my hands a package for mother and my pocket book. I was just trying to tuck this away out of sight when a man sprang out and grasped my hand.

It was horrible!

I sprang back, but it was no use — he had my things in a moment and had thrown me aside like a child. I suppose I must

* Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

have screamed, for I heard running footsteps and then realized that a man — a man this time, and not a villain — was driving the thief back with heavy blows of his walking stick. He beat him back finely and then handed me my things, for the thief had dropped them when he threw up his hands to protect himself.

But suddenly there was the flash of a knife. The man who had come to my assistance reeled a moment, then fell heavily, his head striking on the curb.

I reeled myself at the sight and at my new danger, when I felt that some one else had come up and that the thief was running. I looked around wildly. A big policeman, too, was laboring heavily along half-way down the block. I heard him call the fellow to stop, heard him fire, and then slipping quickly around the corner I ran with all my might to the cars.

That was last night. It was nothing to what I have gone through this morning.

The newspaper is black with flaring head-lines, in type two inches high. That affair of mine is mixed up in the most hideous way with something dreadfully serious.

All Washington is agog just now over this war threatening with Spain. I don't wonder. I've been one of the enthusiasts myself — have been one perfect burst of patriotism.

Now think of this — from the paper — but in my own way:

It seems that a few days ago some important plans of forts were missed from their place at the War Department. A Mr. Sydney W. Scudamore — a brilliant young fellow he had the reputation of being — was in charge of that work and suspicion fell upon him; especially as he seems to have known intimately a very beautiful young Spanish girl they now think was a spy.

The affair was hushed up at once and didn't become public property, but one of those newspaper men in some way heard of it. He said nothing — but shadowed Mr. Scudamore.

The man who rescued me last night, and who was injured, was Sydney W. Scudamore. The man who came up afterward, just in time to see him hand me the package, was the reporter. I remember he tried to stop me, but he tripped over Mr. Scudamore and, as I said, I got away in the dusk down the other street.

Mr. Scudamore was taken to the hospital unconscious. The

paper says he is suffering from concussion of the brain. It may be weeks before he recovers. It may be a mercy if he never does, for the reporter at once saw the Secretary of War. They investigated and found that more plans had just disappeared — those of the defences of an important harbor.

Now, remember, Mr. Scudamore handed a package to me. I, apparently, made off with it. You know how dark my complexion is — in short, I am taken for the Spanish spy.

Horrors! Just think of it — *I!*

Naturally they took me to be the other woman, and not the "beautiful and fashionable" (I quote) Miss Barbara Downing.

She and I must look greatly alike, for the reporter, of course, had an opportunity of seeing my face pretty plainly.

I had to stop writing for a few minutes, for mother came in. Poor conventional mamma! What would she say if she imagined for one little moment the tenth part of this. I had to tell a fib — no, a staring lie — to account for my absence last evening. I simply could not face the storm of tears and distress that I knew would follow if she learned of my adventure. She would die of mortification and misery did she know of this new complication.

And that complication is the worst of all. I know down in my heart that I ought to come forward and say that at least in this instance Mr. Scudamore is innocent; that that little package which has raised such a storm — which lies there on the chiffonier forgotten in all this turmoil — contains, not plans of forbidding forts and defences, but — *insertion.*

What creatures we women are! Here am I laughing and crying and wringing my hands all at once; resolving to go immediately and vindicate Mr. Scudamore and knowing way down inside of me that I never will.

For I have been fighting it out by the hour. I cannot do it. My mother, my friends, the whole world about me — what would they think? My foolish adventure, a street brawl, mixed up with all sorts of people. Ah, the conventions have, you see, fixed their hold on me, too. Strong — stronger they are to us than anything God made — these ropes of our own twisting.

Call it weakness, wickedness, anything you like. What it really is is cold, ice-hearted selfishness. I might as well be hon-

est about it — Americans do not worship their ancestors as they do in Japan — we Downings have always been a selfish people. We have all lived for ourselves — *I* have, my whole nineteen years. So I have set my teeth hard. Destroy myself to save him — whom I have never before seen or heard of — and never again shall — and who does not know of my existence? No! I can't and I won't!

. . . . . .

When Barbara made her resolution she had made it deliberately, with a strong suspicion that she should not be able to forget what she had done.

What she had not counted upon was that she would be filled with an insatiable curiosity as to the man her silence injured.

The comment of the newspapers and the gossip of society but whetted her interest — for she found that he was a man of her own world — known to many of her friends, he and his sister, a charming girl, devotedly nursing him in his present illness.

The verdict of society could hardly be called a divided one — there was too little general doubt as to the man's guilt for that; but the friends whom the two had made were so staunch in his defence — in the assertion of the impossibility of his crime — that, as the days went by, their fierce championship could not fail to make a certain impression.

Government, however, had been relentless. Patriotism was, just then, too militant to be merciful. Scudamore was placed under surveillance, so that from the moment of his return to consciousness his every movement might be known.

Barbara scarcely understood herself. Grasping the situation thoroughly, recognizing that the man's position was pitiable, seeing her own duty, she did not for a moment debate the question of relenting. She could not herself determine whether there was in her a previously unexpected quality of steel, or whether her original deliberate decision had seared her.

But a sin will serve as well as anything to awaken a soul.

Barbara was restless, alert, possessed with a desire to taste the bitterness of her experience to the uttermost. She marvelled at herself, but she understood now that she would never rest till she knew the man himself, saw with her own eyes the devastation she

had wrought, found how he faced his disaster, probed the man's honor and laid bare his heart.

. . . . . .

It was September and the soft air was laden with repose and peace. The breeze from the Atlantic stirred the awnings fitfully.

Violet Scudamore was looking out over the strip of beach and the plane of hazy blue beyond, but her eyes were unseeing. As fragile as the flower whose name she bore, her brightness was that of a bird. Even in quietude she seemed always poised — ready for a movement or a burst into song. And yet she was a *wounded* bird. There was a pathetic droop to the graceful head with its crown of sunlit hair.

Suddenly she turned.

"Barbara" — she laid her hand on the other's knee — "what should we have done without you! With you the summer has been almost happy."

Barbara bent her head low.

"Don't! I am glad if our being together has been any help, but — "

"Any help! you've been so cheerful, so steady — the life of the house, dear. When you consented to join fortunes with us and take this cottage, I — pranced. I *did*. And you've been so wonderful!"

Barbara laughed.

"You have. You seemed instantly to understand Syd's feelings that all should be the same as if nothing had happened. never a slip, never a question. That is the way I'm sure Sydney wanted it and you've helped him. He would always have been brave, but for hours at a time you even make him forget."

"Hush! Hush!" said Barbara.

"No. I *will* talk for once," and the perverse little beauty seemed likely to have her way.

"If I had been here alone with him he would never have weakened, but he would have eaten his heart out. I know how savage he was that people wouldn't believe. When the Secretary interviewed him — "

Barbara's eyes burned with interest now though she strove to hide them.

"Sydney wasn't particularly polite — he swore.

"You know I was with him," Violet went on, "but so was an officer. From the moment he came back to consciousness, no one — not even I — was allowed to communicate with him.

"It must have been a frightful blow to come to oneself and find such a condition of things — but do you know he seemed to realize that he must get better in order to understand, and instead of going off into the relapse I feared, he began to pick up immediately.

"Then one day the Secretary himself came. He was gloomy and stern. Syd lay still and heard him through. His face was a mask — even I couldn't read it — but what one could see for the bandages grew whiter and whiter and his eyes burned blacker and blacker.

"When the Secretary finished Syd said quietly, but in a voice that fairly bit:

"'Don't you know a *man* when you see him? Damn your suspicions! Damn *you!*'

"In a moment the Secretary said:

"'Tell me the story, then.'

"'There is little to tell,' Sydney answered. 'Turned the corner — saw a fellow snatch from girl pocket book — and a package. Let the fellow have it with my stick. He fell back — I picked up the things — handed them to the girl — saw something flash — woke up here.'

"'And that is the story I am to tell?' the Secretary asked.

"'*You* may tell precisely what you please. *I'm* telling you the truth.' I thought Syd's eyes would scorch him.

"Then Syd said, 'If you don't mind I think I'll say good morning and go to sleep,' and he turned over and shut his eyes.

"The Secretary stood up. Then he said in a queer voice:

"'Mr. Scudamore!'

"Syd turned back again.

"'Mr. Scudamore,' he said, 'I hope you will soon be well,' and he held out his hand.

"Syd took it and for the first time his lip quivered.

"'Thank you — I beg your pardon.'

"'Mr. Scudamore,' said he, 'I beg yours.'

"He went away — and the officer went with him. Syd could have gone back to the Department weeks ago and the Secretary would have kept him there, despite all the clamor they could have raised, but he feels he can better find out who really took the papers in a way of his own. Do you know I'm afraid," — and Violet shrank and dropped her voice — "that if he ever does find that man, he'll kill him."

The graceful head drooped again at the thought of further possible trouble.

"Be brave, dear," and Barbara took the little hand in hers. "It will all be right yet."

"I am so *jumpy*," and Violet gave a sad little laugh. "One moment hopeful and happy — and the next, down — way down. Why can't I be as you are nowadays — so strong and even? You were not quite so at first. You never let Sydney know it, but I saw sometimes, when you thought I didn't, that you almost gave way. You were bearing up to help *us* and you had some trouble of your own — I know it. I think you have it yet."

Barbara was silent. Then she broke out: "Yes, and some day you will both know me as I am. I have tried to make you and Sydney see me as I see myself — but you won't."

"No, we won't," — and the other smiled — "*we* know you better than you know yourself."

Barbara started, opened her lips to speak — and bit them hard.

In a moment she said:

"It is useless to talk," and sighing, turned wearily away.

In a moment she returned, and said:

"I think I will take a long walk up the beach." Her steps were without animation, and Violet looked after her wonderingly.

It was dusk when she returned. She saw Violet's white frock fluttering as she ran to meet her.

"Oh, Barbara, Barbara," she gasped, "the girl has come forward at last. The Secretary has had a letter from her and she confirms everything Sydney said. I am so happy — so happy."

"I am glad. She should have done it long ago," Barbara said soberly.

"And Sydney doesn't yet know who it is. She sent a regular affidavit — sworn to — and it is all to be published over her signa-

ture on Saturday, but she asked the Secretary to withhold her name until then.

"Barbara," she went on, "I think Sydney wanted to tell you himself. He asked for you at once and seemed bitterly disappointed when he found you weren't here —"

"Oh, don't! don't!" said Barbara.

Violet again looked at her in surprise, and then went on:

"But he had to tramp down the beach to the station to get a necessary statement into the post to-night, and he asked me to tell you so you'd know at once. Why didn't she come forward before? I can't understand it."

"No," said Barbara, "and when it is all told it will probably be impossible to understand."

And then Sydney came, with face illumined, and took her hands.

Violet slipped away and left them together.

Scudamore shook his head slowly.

"I think you are right. I feel as if I myself shall never quite understand. But when I know her name I shall see her. I am a just man and I do not want to go through life believing what I am now forced to believe about that girl.

"When I came to myself and found out all that had happened — and all that had *not* happened — it seemed to me that nothing should have kept her back. I want to know her — to understand the truth — to know what were the palliating circumstances —"

"Sydney, there were none. I was the girl."

He recoiled from the blow. It had sunk home instantly. There was no question of the truth. The girl's misery was appalling. The months of agony had gone into her very life. She lay back — like a dead thing.

But he could not touch her — he could not speak. This thing stood between them.

He sank upon the step at her feet.

He pleaded for pardon at his ignorant misjudgment of her — begged her to tell him why she had taken a course which compelled him ignorantly to such misjudgment.

She only shook her head.

With his utmost endeavor, his utmost patience, revolted at this new knowledge and yet drawn by her lovableness, her newly mani-

fested courage, her misery, did Sydney endeavor to get at the mystery of her own point of view.

Her only reply was, "I had no excuse! I had no excuse!"

Her hands were twitching in her lap and then he took them in his own. In a voice she did not recognize, he said:

"For the love of God — Barbara — tell me. You see now what it means to me. I love you — I never knew how much till this came between us. You came into my life when it was emptied of everything — of ambition, of hope, of faith — and filled it. Tell me, dear heart, how I came to misjudge you so?"

"You did not misjudge me," she moaned.

He buried his face in his hands and tried to think calmly.

Then again he spoke.

"But you have done everything now."

She shook her head.

"It is no use to excuse. I thought of no one except myself. I cared nothing how an unknown man might suffer. I met you out of curiosity."

Again he drew back.

She went on —

"But you were so brave, so quiet, so strong. And then I wanted to prove you, to test your endurance of such trouble. Oh, I am hard, hard!

"Forgive me — and yet I cannot ask it. It was only when I met you — knew you — that I relented — not that I was less selfish; it was only selfishness in another form — only because, because — yes, I will tell you all — because" — she hid her face — "I loved you."

He took her hands from her face and pressed his lips to them.

"Then," he said, "brush it all away. Forget it as utterly as I shall do. Can't you see that love has changed you — has made such things impossible for the future? Let the past go and be only thankful that it has brought us together."

"I cannot. I cannot. You feel now that you can forget, but in the future you cannot fail to remember. If any suspicion of me should arise, there would be the doubt — always."

"Never. You do not know me."

"Oh, I know you would try; you think you would succeed.

But then, too, don't you see that I cannot accept joy out of such sorrow to you!"

"Do you forget the joy you would give me too? Sweep all the rest away, dear. My God! if you could have seen into my own heart — all the anger, revolt, bitterness, hatred. Let it all go."

But she said:

"It must be self, still — pride, or what you may choose to call it, but I cannot, I cannot — yet.

"I must redeem it all. I don't know how — I can't see my way — I can't see anything — only that I must not — now."

. . . . . .

Barbara smiled grimly. No one was more conscious than herself that since she had walked these streets in the spring she had become a new Barbara. She recognized that her present errand might be characterized as a desperate one, yet she did not falter.

But yesterday she had had an encounter. A girl in black, wan of face, weary, yet of unmistakable beauty, and she had met face to face on this same street. It is a somewhat startling sensation to encounter one who in general type and appearance might well be taken for oneself; it becomes a bit grewsome when that person — as did this one — starts in evident recognition, with something approaching dread, then with averted face speeds on her way.

This incident had caused Barbara some moments of intense thought, a reaching back through her consciousness and then a sudden memory — the confusion of herself with another in the newspaper report months before.

It was an excited Barbara now, yet a coolly determined one. Not many minutes later she sat in a detective's office.

"I want you to find me a woman who looks greatly like myself," she said.

"She seems to be in demand," came the reply.

Barbara started.

"One of *The Gleam* reporters kept his eye on her for months after the first inkling of the disappearance of those government papers — and their own men have watched her closely enough, too. I don't think they ever learned anything."

"If you will be good enough to give me her address —" Barbara produced her purse.

And now she was on her way thither.

She found the neighborhood dismally unattractive. Well-soiled children romped noisily over the adjoining doorsteps.

The girl herself answered Barbara's ring. If there was an instinctive start it was well veiled by a mechanical, "Won't you come in?"

The room was poorly furnished. A typewriter stood by the window — on the table straggled some written sheets.

"Do you know who I am?" asked Barbara.

"Miss Downing is known by sight to many persons in Washington," was her reply.

"I want you," said Barbara, "to tell me where those government plans are."

The girl's eyes flashed, but her only reply was a weary gesture.

"I know you can tell me," persisted Barbara.

"I am sorry that your name became connected with the affair — and I am sorrier that my own did. I have been persecuted about those papers — and I know nothing about them."

"Will you please tell me," said Barbara, "how your name became connected with them?"

"I do not know, except that I called several times at Mr. Scudamore's office regarding work."

"Did you know any one else in the office?"

"No," came the answer quickly — a little too quickly, Barbara thought; still she seemed unlikely to learn anything from this source.

"I think you do," she said.

The girl swept to her feet in indignation.

"You do it well," said Barbara.

The other turned white, but kept her lips firmly closed.

"I beg your pardon," — and Barbara caught her hand winningly and pulled her back into her chair — "for being so hard on you, and yet I *know* you can help me, and — I beg you to believe me — it is vital."

She stopped, and the other looking her in the eyes knew that she meant what she had said; still she did not relent.

"Have you had no troubles yourself?" Barbara went on — "I know you have had — it is in your face. You, too, have suffered

— I believe on this very account. Tell me, won't you? If you will do *that*, no way in which I can help you will be enough." Barbara laid her hand over the other's. "Oh, be good to me!" she cried. "It means everything," — and then, as she saw no sign, she bowed her head over their joined hands and burst into a storm of weeping.

And then the other perceived that Barbara, with all her courage, was but a girl, not stiffened and hardened by years of adventure and adversity like herself, and at last her eyes softened. With a touch of sympathy she put her other hand on the bowed head. They were now simply two women together.

"Does it mean so much — dear?" she said.

"Everything," sobbed Barbara. "I thought I could go without happiness, but I cannot."

"I think I see," said the other slowly. "But I have lost my own life's happiness — and have had to bear it."

Barbara clasped more tightly the hand she held.

"You poor, dear girl! Is there anything? Can I — "

The other shook her head, then said:

"Do you know I used to hate you!"

"Hate me!" exclaimed Barbara, astonished.

"Yes. I first noticed you with other girls the last year, I suppose, that you were at school. You were charmingly dressed, laughing, happy — and I was miserable. I found out who you were. And then you went into society. I read in the paper of your début, your triumphs, and I thought how I could have equalled them if I had been born in your position. I hated you; and when you were brought into this affair (for I suspected it was you) I was glad. When you didn't have the courage to come forward I despised you. I knew where you were last summer. Then came your acknowledgment. I think I understand."

Barbara flushed — but only said:

"Please do not hate me now. Remember it was not my fault. I never injured you. Tell me, why were you so unhappy?"

"We — my brother and I — were born in Spain, but my father was an American. My father was a man of position here, but he was dissipated — a brute, and dragged us down. He ill-treated my mother — my dear, beautiful mother.

"My brother — you would never have known there was a drop of Spanish blood in him — was named after and resembled father — and hated him for it. He was chivalrous and — as I did — adored mamma. He was sensitive, high-strung, and the rough schoolboys persecuted him. I tried to show him that it was so everywhere — that those who are rough and uncouth do not understand those who are fine — but he would not see. He came to hate the very name of America.

"And then mamma died — and our father went away and left us — to care for ourselves.

"My brother got a clerkship in the War Department. And then came the long disagreement between the countries that led to war. My brother did not dare let them see how he felt — for we had to live — but he had to hear all the talk against the land he idolized — though he remembered little of it, and was wrong. And then he took the plans."

Barbara held her breath.

"I did not know it," the girl went on. "I do not know how he ever got them — he was only a minor clerk — and they never suspected him. When I went to Mr. Scudamore for work I did not see my brother, for he was in another office, and no one knew the relationship.

"One morning he did not come downstairs. His bed had not been slept in. There was a letter telling me everything and telling me, too, that he had gone South and had joined the Spanish secret service. He left me a considerable sum — all he had.

"A comrade afterward told me that he served under mother's family name — that he would bear my father's no longer. He was captured" — the girl broke down — "and shot as a spy."

Barbara held the sobbing girl and rocked to and fro.

"And you have borne all this," she said, "and have told me so that I might be happy. Oh, you are good, good. And you shall be happy again, too."

"No, no!"

"You shall be!" said Barbara. "I always have my own way and I shall have it in this, too. You shall see, you dear girl."

The other rose slowly and left the room. In a few moments she returned.

"It is my brother's letter. Give it to Mr. Scudamore — he will know how to use it — but ask him to arrange with the Secretary that the name need never be known."

. . . . . .

I think it has been remarked that no mere man may fathom a woman's moods. The phrase has a familiar ring.

During his acquaintance with Barbara, Sydney Scudamore felt that he had experienced the truth of this axiom as often as was comfortable, but to-night his bewilderment was complete.

She circled around him like a bird, she tormented and teased, she was dazzling and altogether charming.

The truth was — as you will realize if you think of it — that for the first time he had met the care-free Barbara.

Her talk rippled on and her lightness lifted Sydney out of the dark mood which had become too habitual of late into a happiness he felt would be permanent could he but possess the cause of it.

"Now," she said, "he looks like a proper man — and less like an owl. His big eyes are no longer sad." She stood tantalizingly before him, balancing herself upon her toes.

His hands went lovingly to her shoulders.

"Barbara," he said, "you're a witch — and the *dearest* witch."

"Yes. I'm just that, Sydney. Look at this."

Wonderingly he took the letter from her hand, read a few lines and again wonderingly looked at her.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Go on. Read it all."

His face grew white as he took in the story; then, as the last of the load he had borne for months dropped away, he raised his eyes to hers. The paper slipped from his fingers and fluttered to the floor.

Then —

But now, I think, this tale is told.

The Cross on the Plain.*

BY GEORGE DYRE ELDRIDGE.

LAND so desolate that imagination might not picture it; the surface alternating in gray and red, where the disintegrated lime and sandstone lay side by side without mingling; a soil too coarse for vegetation, hard with the baking of a burning sun, and worn into ridges, where the spring torrents from the melting snow of the mountains had eaten away the softer earth. In scattered clumps, gray sage — seeming in its lifeless dryness rather a part of the dead soil than a living growth from it. Here and there gleamed white in the sunshine masses of bleached bones of cattle — perhaps of men — who had wandered there and died. The vast plain that stretched, a dead waste, to the mountains which hung like banks of mists on the edge of the horizon, was broken by hideous masses of red sandstone, gigantic, water-worn into curious shapes by the floods of ages untold. Here, one stood isolated, in the form of a crouching animal ready to spring; there, they lay along the plain, as if huge lizards had been suddenly turned to stone. Again, one towered like a pillar, carved with strange devices of a forgotten people, and yonder, in masses and groups and rows, they seemed the ruins of some vast city, whose streets and squares must have echoed to busy feet hundreds — thousands of years ago. Not a tree in the vast plain, but over all a sky without a cloud, and a sun, not yet at the meridian, that burned with more than tropic heat.

Suddenly, in the very centre of this horror of desolation, appeared a man. He was crouching in the water-worn hollow of one of the biggest rocks, cowering in its blackest shadow and gazing off across the wide plain to the dim mist that told where the mountains lay. There was a haggard, hunted look in his

* Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

face, and when in the deep stillness, unbroken by the hum of a locust or the buzz of a beetle, a bit of sandstone dropped from the great boulders, he shivered as with fear and drew deeper into the shadow of the hollowed rock.

After some minutes, he seemed to gather courage and suddenly dropped from his rock-shelter, flat upon the ground, still, however, within the shadows of the great boulder. Then he raised his head and again gazed away towards the mountain. It was as if he felt that the mountain had eyes and was watching the great plain, on which anything that moved would be seen through the clear air and known by its power of life to be strange to that dead world.

After a time he was crawling like a lizard, out of the shadows, across a stretch of hot sunlight, in among the scant sage bushes — crawling as if he would be a part of the gray and red earth, if only he could burrow into it and escape sight. Even when he reached the sage bushes he did not rise, but instead, crept on and on, until he came to one of those hideous water-worn gullies, into which he rolled without raising his body from the ground.

There he lay for a time, as if expecting that the dead plain would give some token that his caution had been in vain. Streams of perspiration rolled down his face and mixed with the white dust that was rising constantly from the dead soil, working into the pores of his skin and parching his mouth and throat as he lay and listened to his own heart beats and the awful silence.

Evidently the gully had been selected as leading in the direction he wished to take, for finally he rose to a crouching posture and began to move up its course, walking almost swiftly, though with still bended back, where it was deep and the sage bush hung over it, and crawling again where it grew shallow and lay open to the sun. In this way, after an hour of toil, he reached a mass of boulders, around which the gully bent, and here he raised himself in the deep shadows on the side farthest from the mountains he had watched so intently before he began his journey and darted suddenly under the overhanging ledge, where the water had worn away the softer rock, and hid again in a hollow as before.

Then followed hours of strange toil. At times the man lay flat on the hot plain and dragged himself along, taking minutes

to move his own length, so that any one watching would have needed a keen and steady eye to be certain that he moved at all. Then, in a friendly gully, he moved faster, with the crouching posture of the morning, and even once, where the great boulders stood like the ruins of an ancient city, he almost ran through the black shadows of what seemed once to have been a street, only throwing himself down to crawl where an open place, like a cross street, let in the unwelcome sunlight.

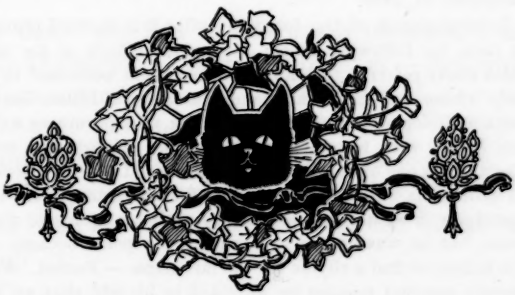
The perspiration had ceased to flow, for every drop of moisture was burned from his body. The grime stood on his face in dry patches; his eyes were red and bloodshot; his tongue hung from his mouth, and even the hot stones had ceased to burn his flesh, so hot had it become in his fierce struggle under that untempered sun.

In the early afternoon, he stopped to rest in the shaded hollow of a boulder, and suddenly, as he looked to the ground, his face blanched under its coating of grime. A broken sage bush told where a foot had passed! This man had reached a point where signs of humanity were more terrible than the death that surrounded him on every hand! He looked again, and the pallor became more terrible, with the set terror of despair. He recognized the spot where he had rested in the morning and from which he had crawled to the first gully! It was *his* foot that had broken the sage bush, and all these hours of superhuman toil had availed only to bring him back to his starting-point! Then he rose erect, no longer creeping, no longer skulking, but upright, as God meant man to walk, and took the direction in which lay the mist that was a mountain.

Hours passed again! The sun had almost touched the top of the mountains, which now rose huge and dark before the man who dragged on and on, over the dead plain, with purple face and swollen hands and feet, filled with but one thought, conscious of bu one wish, to reach the shelter of the mountains, and there to find water, and, drinking, perchance to die.

Long shadows ran out to meet him; a cooler air from the mountain heights touched his brow. In a gully, high up among the ragge pines, he caught a sheen of light, where the last sun rays struck a falling stream. Suddenly, from behind a great boulder,

a horseman barred the way, the bridle-rein hanging loose, a short rifle at his shoulder, aimed at the hunted man's heart. The fugitive stopped, his weary head dropped, and with his swollen hand he made the sign of the Cross on brow and breast. Then came the sharp, quick ring of the rifle, and the man fell, with arms outspread, and with a single groan lay dead, himself making the sign of the Cross on the dead plain. The horseman adjusted his rifle across his saddle, gave one glance at the dead body, to make sure that his aim had been true, and rode away into the depths of the mountains.



The Rhyme for Rachel.*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.

SEATED in a street car, Miss Marjorie Hollis was absorbed in the latest issue of *The Literary Post*. It contained this week a most unusual announcement, and it was this which now occupied her attention to the exclusion of all else. The announcement read as follows:

> We, the undersigned, executors under the will of a person whose name we withhold for the present, desire to announce that, in accordance with the terms of said will, the sum of $250,000 will be paid to the first person who will submit to us a rhyme for the name RACHEL. This bequest is based on the following conditions, viz.: 1. The rhyme must be a legitimate one. Dialect, foreign or invented words will not be considered. 2. This offer is limited to one year, dating from December 31, 1899.
>
> In explanation of the foregoing offer it is deemed proper to state the following facts: Among the effects of the testator above referred to is an unfinished poem addressed to a lady whose full Christian name was Fedora Lilian Grace Lorain Hildegarde Louise Rachel. The said poem was written by the said testator for the purpose of bringing into rhyme each one of the names aforementioned. He succeeded in writing six stanzas, in which the first six names were respectively introduced in accordance with his aforesaid purpose; but he was unable to complete the poem because of his failure to find a rhyme for the last name — Rachel. For certain personal reasons he provided in his will that an attempt be made, in the manner above set forth, to discover such a rhyme.
>
> As full conditions and all necessary information are contained in the foregoing announcement, the undersigned must decline to consider any inquiries for further explanation.
>
> DUNBURY & BORDEAU,
> *Attorneys-at-Law*, Washington, D. C.

Miss Hollis was rudely interrupted in her reading by the curt demand of the conductor for her fare.

* Copyright, 1901, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

Mechanically she opened her pocketbook and handed out a silver coin, which was immediately refused. It was a Canadian twenty-five-cent piece. The young lady turned scarlet and then pale as she again searched the pocketbook and found but two coppers. The conductor divined the trouble at once and wasted no time.

"You'll have to get off if you can't pay," he announced, with unbecoming loudness. "It's no use talking about it," he went on, bluntly, interrupting the girl as she attempted to expostulate. "It's pay or get off," and he gave the bell-cord a vicious pull.

Burning with mortification, Miss Hollis was about to rise, when a young man seated next to her took the conductor none too gently by the arm. "Here's the lady's fare, you brute," he said, abruptly, at the same time thrusting a nickel into the man's hand.

The conductor grunted and passed on, while Miss Hollis turned her blushing face to her benefactor. "Oh, I thank you so much!" she said, impulsively. "And won't you let me know to whom I am indebted for this kindness, in order that I may repay it?"

"Please don't mention it. It was a pleasure, I assure you. My name is Dillington — Carter Dillington — and you are Miss Hollis, if I am not mistaken?"

"Why, how do you know who I am?"

The young man looked embarrassed for a moment. "Oh," he answered, attempting to smile unconcernedly, "I have seen you quite often. You are employed in one of the offices in the Chester Building."

"Yes?"

"Well, so am I. Is there anything of interest in *The Literary Post* this week? I noticed you were reading it very intently."

"The most extraordinary thing you ever heard of," answered Miss Hollis, as she hurriedly turned the pages of the magazine. "A rhyme for 'Rachel' —"

"You don't mean it!" interrupted the young man, staring at her with a face that had become suddenly ashen. "It can't be true! There is no rhyme for 'Rachel'!"

"No, no; you don't understand. It's an offer of $250,000 to any one who will furnish a rhyme for 'Rachel,'" and Miss

Hollis looked at her companion with ill-concealed surprise at his evident excitement.

"Pardon me," he answered, "I did misunderstand you. Yes, I know about that foolish offer. It looks as if we would have some snow to-night, don't you think so?"

He rose as he spoke. "This is where I get off," he continued, without giving Miss Hollis a chance to reply, and politely raising his hat he passed out of the car.

. . . . . .

Circumstances compelled Marjorie Hollis to earn her living, and against these circumstances her aristocratic and artistic soul waged constant rebellion. Her family and her acquaintances generally regarded her as a spoiled child, troubled with extravagant tastes and a lack of practical sense. On her side, she felt that she was not understood nor properly appreciated — until she met Carter Dillington.

After that first evening she frequently found herself in the same car with him, and the episode of their initial meeting served as an introduction to an acquaintanceship which proved at once mutually congenial. Like herself, Mr. Dillington was poor and had literary aspirations, and Marjorie felt that in him she had at last found a sympathetic fellow-mortal. Her friends regarded him as a most peculiar young man but she looked upon his peculiarities as indications of originality and intellect, which won her admiration from the first. She discovered also many lovable traits in the depths of his nature, and she soon learned to ask no greater pleasure than to be in his company.

He accepted special invitations to the house, but rarely called of his own accord, appearing content to ride home with her in the evening. He was excessively reserved — that was one of his peculiarities — so that notwithstanding the increasing familiarity of the acquaintanceship, Marjorie knew no more of his personal affairs at the end of nine months than she did during the first week.

There was one other subject on which he was equally reticent, and that was the discussion regarding the rhyme for "Rachel." The remarkable offer in connection with this matter was a subject of unending curiosity and discussion in literary circles; but

Carter Dillington pointedly avoided every allusion to it. To Marjorie, on the contrary, it was one of alluring interest. She knew that all literary authorities contended that no rhyme for "Rachel" existed; but Marjorie Hollis had faith in the potency of $250,000 to produce a rhyme, and despite the ridicule of friends and family she asserted her determination to win the prize.

She hesitated a long time before venturing to speak to Mr. Dillington about it. His peculiar aversion to the whole matter embarrassed her. The mere mention of the name "Rachel" disturbed him, and her occasional efforts to lead the conversation around to the subject were promptly frustrated.

Finally, however, she decided to appeal to him for help. Only one more week remained, and she beheld her dreams of wealth fading into the dull reality of drudgery. So, as he was about to take his departure after a short call on Christmas Eve, she said suddenly, "If a person were to find a rhyme for 'Rachel' it would make him famous, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would," he answered drily.

"And it would make him rich?"

"Oh, yes." Then in the same breath he abruptly changed the conversation. "Perhaps, Miss Hollis, it may interest you to know that I expect in the next week or two to come into possession of a small fortune, and I hope then to be married;" and holding out his hand he bade Marjorie good-night.

"Good-night," she responded mechanically; and as the door closed she staggered into the parlor, and, throwing herself upon the sofa, burst into a torrent of passionate tears.

The fond hope that had gradually nestled into her heart during the year was rudely, pitifully shattered. He did not love her! Fo many minutes her emotions could find expression only in choking, moaning sobs.

Then afte the first shock of her grievous awakening came a fierce jealousy of the woman who had gained the affections of the man she loved, and coupled with it there arose in her wounded heart a mad desire for retaliation—revenge for the sorrow he had caused her. She had been neglected because she was poor, because she was a mere wage-earner because —

Suddenly her sobbings ceased. She sat up, bewildered, startled.

In the midst of the turmoil of her troubled spirit there had burst upon her — without warning, without thought — *a rhyme for "Rachel!"*

. . . . . .

Two days later Majorie Hollis was in Washington; and on the morning of December 27th she walked into the office of Dunbury & Bordeau and quietly announced to those two gentlemen that she had come to claim the $250,000 for a rhyme for "Rachel."

For a moment the two men stared at her without uttering a sound.

Mr. Dunbury was the first to find his voice. "Impossible!" he ejaculated. Then noticing the sudden flush upon the girl's face he checked himself. "Pardon me, my dear young lady! I did not mean to doubt your word; but you have astonished us beyond measure. Let me explain," and he placed his chair beside hers.

"The extraordinary offer to which you have responded was made in compliance with the will of our late client, Mr. Benjamin F. Morton. He was a trifle eccentric, and one of his hobbies was writing poetry. He took a great fancy to a nephew of his and spared no money to have the boy well educated. The old gentleman himself had a very limited education, and he was determined that his nephew should not be handicapped as he had been. Well, just about the time the boy got through college the old gentleman struck a snag in this poem of his about Fedora Lilian Hildegarde et al., and he called upon his nephew to help him out with a rhyme for 'Rachel.' The young man informed him that there was no such rhyme, but his uncle refused to believe it. He insisted that as the lad had had a college education he could find a rhyme if he chose. Well, the upshot of it was that the old gentleman took it into his head that his nephew was obstinate and ungrateful, and he cast him off. A short time before he died, however, he finally concluded that perhaps there really was no rhyme for 'Rachel,' and he decided to reinstate his nephew in his will; but with this proviso: that a rhyme should first be advertised for and that should any person produce such a rhyme within a year, then the money should go to such person, instead of the nephew.

"As the executors, we, of course, followed the provisions of the will, but we were definitely satisfied there was no such rhyme.

And yet you say you have found one. I am free to say it seems incredible, incredible. Still, at the same time, the offer is a bona fide one and will be carried out to the letter if your rhyme proves to be a legitimate one. It will certainly prove a most astonishing revelation to us and — to the nephew, Carter Dillington."

Marjorie felt that she was about to faint. With a strenuous effort she recovered herself. The lawyer was still talking, but she did not heed him until he repeated, "And now if you will let us hear the rhyme."

"May I have just a moment to think?" she asked faintly.

"Certainly, certainly! I did not mean to hurry you. Of course, I understand, you feel a trifle agitated; but take your time, and you'll recall the rhyme in a minute or two."

Several moments passed in silence. Then Marjorie arose. She faced the two lawyers, and with a tremor in her voice that she struggled bravely to subdue, she said slowly: "I have not forgotten the rhyme; but — but I have decided not to submit it."

. . . . . .

It was New Year's Day when Marjorie again saw Carter Dillington. He called late in the afternoon. Why had he come? she asked herself. Was it to torment her? To cause her wounded heart to bleed afresh? He appeared not to heed her constrained manner, nor the quick flushes that reddened her cheeks.

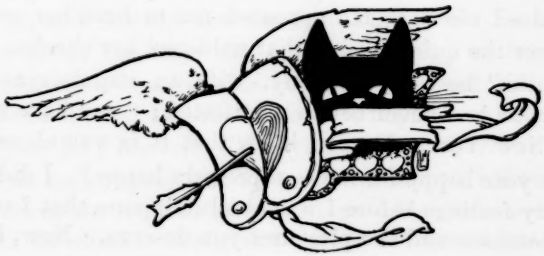
"Marjorie," he said suddenly, with an impulsiveness and a familiarity he had never before manifested; "you have wished me a happy New Year. Do you know that it is you alone who can make the year happy for me — supremely happy? I did not dare express my feelings before I was absolutely sure that I could offer you the comforts and the pleasures you deserve. Now, I am independent — wealthy; and you, Marjorie, will you share my fortune with me?"

It was late ere the lovers were ready to part. "Is it any wonder," he was saying, as he lingeringly prepared to leave, "that I avoided the subject of my uncle's outlandish offer? Supposing that by some possibility there had been a rhyme for 'Rachel'; supposing some one had succeeded in finding it! But thank fortune, dear, there is none!"

"Yes, but there is a rhyme for 'Rachel,'" she answered softly,

casting down her eyes to hide her sudden emotion. "Would you like to hear it? Let us sit down here — on the sofa, and I will tell it to you."

She waited a moment after they were seated, and then in a half tremulous whisper she recited the following lines:

"A fitting rhyme has long been found
For each and all of these —
Fedora, Lilian, Grace, Lorain
And Hildegarde, Louise;
And in these names themselves we find
The hidden rhyme for Rachel;
For, lo, the letters of these names
Are F. L., G. L., H. L."

Then in the quiet glow of the midnight firelight she told him her little story.